

PLEASE KEEP

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"Hail, old October, bright and chill,
First freedman from the summer sun!
Spice high the bowl and drink your fill!
Thank Heaven, at last the summer's done!"

An American divine wrote that October is nature's funeral month and that the month of departure is more beautiful than the month of coming: that October is more beautiful than May. Gardeners may well argue about that, but they will agree that the sun of their gardening year is setting in October. It is a time for reflection, for a judicial summing up of our successes and failures.

Are our failures due to any lack in ourselves? Did we fail to tackle those pests in good time or did those poor, worthless crops result from a lack of fertility in our soil? The farmer, we are told, looks at winter with spring in his eyes. So does the good gardener. For both the practical couplet is this: "In October dung your field,

And your land its wealth shall yield."
But the reader may say, "It's all



very well for the farmer, but where can I get dung?" Well, the answer to that has been given many many times: it is simply this—if you can't get dung, make compost. And how few gardeners do, yet compost will help them to keep their

land fertile.

THAT COMPOST

October is the picture month—the month for painted leaves, as Thoreau, the American nature writer called it. That's a nice poetic thought, but to the sensible gardener those painted leaves, when they drop, become compost. Leaves of oak, beech and birch are very valuable for the compost heap, but pine and spruce needles, together with lime and plane tree leaves, are best burnt and the ashes used instead as a fertiliser.

Don't make the mistake of piling masses of fallen leaves and autumnal garden waste on the heap that you may have started several months ago. Start a fresh heap, turning back to the March Guide for advice. Turn

over the old heap now, and any material that has not rotted completely should be placed on the inside of the new heap, the properly decomposed stuff going to the outside.

CLEAR THAT RUBBISH

Clearing up the garden or allotment is a job that should not be put off. If decaying vegetable material, old sticks, cabbage stumps and other rubbish is left to rot in the garden, all kinds of pests and vermin will be encouraged. Keep up with the work of clearing the ground as soon as the crops are finished. Put all suitable material on the compost heap, while not forgetting the needs of any domestic livestock.

Bean sticks can often be made to serve two seasons, if they are care-

fully stored and kept dry during the winter. Pea sticks of the brushwood type are seldom much use after one season and should be burned.



RUBBISH HARBOURS PESTS

THOSE BONFIRES

Keep them to the smallest limits and burn only woody or diseased material, the underground parts of thistles, docks, couch grass and the like.

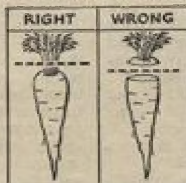
Bonfire ash should not be left out for the rain and dew to dissolve and

wash away the very soluble form of potash it contains. It can be incorporated in the garden soil immediately it is cold, or it may be bagged, stored in a dry place and used as a fertilizer when needed.

More about **STORING**

CARROTS

The main carrot crop should now be ready for lifting. Treat the roots carefully, lifting with a fork and taking care not to damage roots or crown. Trim off the leaves near the crown, but do not cut the top part of the carrot, even if it is green. Some gardeners slash off the top half-inch, but that leads to



trouble later on when the carrots are stored. Any split, misshapen, forked roots, or those that show signs of damage by carrot fly or other pests, should be kept out for use in the next few weeks. The rest can be stored, either indoors, or, if you have more than you can conveniently store under cover, you could clamp them as you would potatoes — (see September Guide).

Carrots stored indoors can best be kept in boxes. A layer of dry sand, soil or ashes should be placed over the bottom of the box or other container, then a layer of carrots completely covered with sand, and so on until the box is full.

Clamping outside is very simple. Make a level site, preferably in the shade, and place the carrots, thick end to the outside, in the form of a circle. Lay a few carrots in the middle and sprinkle a little sand over them to level up; then put a second layer of carrots on the top of the first, and so on. The circular layers

get a little narrower each time until the whole heap builds up into a shapely cone. Cover the cone with a layer of 4 to 6 in. of straw. Then dig out about a foot of soil around the heap, to get sufficient to cover the clamp to a depth of 6 to 8 in. Leave ventilation holes at the top, filling them with twists of straw that show through the soil. Otherwise cover the whole clamp with soil before severe weather sets in. It may be necessary later on to add a little more soil to the outer covering, but 8 in. should provide enough protection in a reasonably mild winter.



BEETS

Beetroots, too, must be lifted before frost seriously threatens. The leaves are twisted off—not cut—and the roots taken inside to store. This is better than trying to store them in clamps in the open. They should be buried in boxes or barrels of sand, ashes or finely-sifted soil. Whatever material you use should not be bone dry; while it should be moderately dry, the roots may shrivel if it is quite dry. The boxes of roots should be stood in a shed, cellar or store of some kind that is frostproof. A storage temperature of between 30° and 35°F. is most suitable. The

important point to remember is that the beet must be kept free from frost. During hard frosts, if the store is not frostproof, an additional covering of old sacks, bracken, straw or something of a similar nature, should be heaped over and around the boxes. Stored in this way the roots will keep for many months.



About those **ARTICHOKES**

Some readers may be wondering if Jerusalem artichokes should be lifted like potatoes. That is not necessary; indeed, they keep better in the ground if, in very severe weather, a covering of leaves or bracken is heaped over the roots. The stems should be cut down now

and bruised and put on the compost heap, but the roots may stop in the ground until after Christmas. Most gardeners lift the tubers in February and replant some for next year. Those intended for the kitchen are then stored in damp sand and can be kept fresh for several months.

Picking **BRUSSELS** . . . a tip

Early-planted Brussels sprouts should now be ready for picking. There is a right way and a wrong way of gathering them. Start at the bottom and clear the stem of sprouts as they become large enough; don't pick a sprout here and there, but do it systematically from the bottom of the



stem. Some gardeners are doubtful whether they should remove the growing tuft of leaves at the top of the plant. That should be left until next spring, for the leaves are necessary to the health of the plant and also afford protection from the weather.

A **LEEK** tip

A little soil should be drawn up to leek plants now to encourage them

to produce sizeable, well-blanced stems.

Getting early **RHUBARB**

Forced or early rhubarb is one of the things we can enjoy in these difficult days when delicacies are none too plentiful. If you have some good crowns or clumps of rhubarb, you can, without much trouble, provide the table with early stalks. When the plants have shed their summer leaves, place some dry leaves or bracken loosely over the crowns. A box or big pot should be placed over this material, to keep it dry and stop it blowing about. This encourages the rhubarb to

make early growth. If you have a dark shed or a greenhouse, you can lift a few crowns and place them on the shed floor or under the greenhouse staging. Hang sacking in front of the staging to make it dark. Crowns intended for such treatment can be lifted a week or so before they are taken inside. They should be stood on the surface of the soil and if a slight frost occurs, so much the better, it will make them break into growth earlier.



This LIMING business

Much of our land is in need of lime. Every year the soil loses lime steadily and continuously. The rate of loss varies with the circumstances, but in industrial areas there is a



SHEEP'S SORREL crops.

special need for lime because of the acid ingredients in smoke and fumes from factories and business plants. Gradual loss of lime makes the soil become acid and sour—and more so as time goes on. Now lime is an essential plant food; unless the soil contains it in suitable quantity, it is not possible to grow good crops. Most cultivated crops dislike sour soil, except potatoes, which can stand it unless it is very acid. Turnips and swedes, for instance, are both unreliable on such soils and are less capable of withstanding drought and pest attacks. "Finger-and-Toe" or "Club-Root" also indicates the need for lime, as does a heavy soil that shows an excessive stickiness, a tendency to set hard and a difficulty in getting a good tilth. But light, sandy soils lose their lime very quickly, and it is on such soils that troubles from sourness are most common and acute. The presence of certain weeds, such as spurrey, sheep's sorrel and corn marigold, is one of the

best indications of a lack of lime.

Some allotment holders and gardeners have perhaps found it difficult to get the kind of lime they need for their land. Perhaps they put in an order months in advance of liming time and still found they could not get delivery in time. Probably they ordered hydrated lime and would not be satisfied with anything else. So they went without—and their crops suffered. That was a mistake, for other kinds of lime are just as beneficial as hydrated lime, if applied at the proper rate.



CORN MARIGOLD

Some readers, remembering the science of their schooldays, may like to know a bit more about "lime." The word is commonly used to mean not only calcium oxide (quicklime), but also calcium hydroxide (slaked or hydrated lime) and calcium carbonate (limestone and chalk). Though quicklime used to be by far the most common form of lime bought by farmers, carbonate of lime is gaining considerable popularity and is now as much sought after as quicklime and its derivatives—ground and hydrated lime. Quicklime is obtained from either chalk or limestone burnt in a lime kiln. This is generally in lumps or it may be



further processed by crushing to form ground burnt lime, or still further by the addition of a controlled amount of water to form calcium hydroxide (slaked or hydrated lime). The last is always in a fine state of division, easily stored, and probably for that reason has been much in demand by gardeners. The other form of lime that is more suitable for storage is carbonate of lime, which may be limestone or chalk (really a soft limestone) both ground to a fine powder. Quality depends to a great extent on the pureness of the rock from which lime is derived.

The demands for hydrated lime are much greater than the supply. This shortage affects farmers as well as allotment holders and gardeners, and is due to the fact that other vital industries—especially the building trade—need most of the hydrated lime produced to-day. What can the gardener or allotment holder do if he cannot get his little bit of "hydrated"? The answer to that is try finely ground limestone or chalk. Both are equally effective as hydrated when applied in



the appropriate quantities necessary to correct the sourness of the soil. Hydrated costs nearly twice as much as ground limestone; on the other hand it is necessary to put on one and a half times as much ground limestone as hydrated. Both ground limestone and chalk are fairly readily obtainable compared with hydrated lime.

It does not follow from what has already been said that all gardens and allotments need lime. The only sure way of finding out what is lacking in the soil is to have it tested. The local Parks Superintendent, the secretary of the district allotments or horticultural society or some knowledgeable neighbour would advise how this can be done.

On planting **FRUIT TREES**

In the September Guide we dealt with the sort of fruit to grow in the small garden and promised later on to supply information about planting. Here it is.

First of all, the site. Peaches and pears need abundant sunshine. Most other fruits do best in a sunny position, but are not so particular and often succeed in partial shade.

Peaches or pears should go on the south wall or fence, apples and plums on the west or east, and morello cherries on the north. Black currants, gooseberries and raspberries should be in a bed where they can be netted against bird attack. Loganberries or blackberries should be trained on a boundary fence.

In the open garden you could plant one or more dwarf bush apples or gooseberry, red or black currant

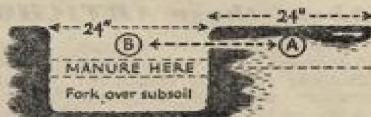
bushes. Apples planted about 10 to 15 ft. apart in a square could have a gooseberry or currant bush placed in the centre.

As fruit trees and bushes have to



BASTARD TRENCHING

Break up and turn over subsoil, add manure, and then move topsoil A to B



grow on the same piece of ground for several years, you must cultivate the plot thoroughly and deeply. The best method is bastard trenching, breaking up the sub-soil as far as possible. Do this over the whole fruit plot—especially on heavy soils—not just where the tree or bush is to stand.

As to manure, the general rule is that bush fruits need much bulky organic stuff, which provides the soil with plenty of humus (see January Guide). Through generous manuring the moisture is retained near the surface and close to the shallow roots of bush fruits. Use farmyard manure, if you can get it; if not, you could use good stuff from the compost heap, decayed lawn clippings or similar material. Apply between the first and second spits when bastard trenching. When planting cordon apples give similar treatment, making the border so treated 3 ft. wide. In the open garden, if the soil is in an average state of fertility, no special treatment is needed and no bulky manure should be applied, since this would hasten growth and delay fruiting.

When you come to planting, use a line to keep the rows straight and put in sticks to show the position of each tree or bush. Provided the weather is not frosty, you can plant at any time between late autumn and the end of March, but, if possible, plant in late autumn. Don't plant when the ground is too wet or too sticky; wait until it is reasonably dry and workable. If the weather is frosty when you get your trees or bushes, cover the roots with soil and wait until you can plant out.

Cordon apples are usually planted 2 ft. to 3 ft. apart in the row, while bush apples on dwarf stocks are given



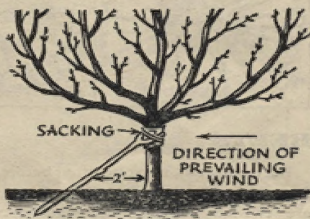
10 ft. 5 ft. apart each way is the distance for gooseberry and currant bushes, while raspberry canes should be placed 18 in. apart with 6 ft. between the rows. If you are planting cordon gooseberries or red currants, allow 1 ft. apart.

For the rest of this note it is proposed to deal with the planting of cordon and bush apples. When the time is right, take out enough soil to make a hole wide and deep enough to allow the roots to be evenly spread out. In planting cordon apples it is generally better to take out a fairly wide shallow trench along the entire row. Cut back any coarse or injured roots on tree or bush, using an upward sloping cut. Set the tree in the hole and spread the roots out evenly. In planting against a wall or fence keep the stem about 6 in. away from it. Sprinkle some fine soil over the roots. If there is more than one layer of roots, hold up the upper roots. Work the soil well into the spaces between the lower roots, and when they are covered, tread the soil firmly. Keep on filling and treading until the hole is completely filled in. Firm planting is very important, but

do not plant any deeper than the tree or bush was planted in the nursery: you can usually judge this by the ring of soil adhering to the stem. Complete your planting by giving a mulch of farmyard manure or compost.

Cordon apples are not set upright, but sloping at an angle of about 45°. If your rows run north to south, keep the roots to the south, with the top of the tree sloping north. When the rows run east to west, the slope of the trees is not so important.

Bush apples on Malling IX root stock (see September Guide) need staking with a stout stake, which should be driven in about 2 ft. from the base of the stem, so that the stake rests against the stem at an angle of about 45° and points in the direction from which the wind generally comes. The stake should



be driven in securely until the top just comes to rest against the stem below the lowest branch. Wrap a bit of sacking round the stem at the top, so as to prevent the tree being chafed, and then tie stem and stake together with a strong cord.

The pruning of newly-planted fruit trees and bushes will be touched on in a later Guide.

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